



EOC Spot Report: Update 3 West Fertilizer Plant Explosion

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**US Environmental Protection Agency
2013**

Report as of 1400 EDT April 19,

Overview: At approximately 1950 CDT on April 17, a fire and explosion at the West Fertilizer plant decimated the town of West, TX, north of Waco, causing multiple injuries and fatalities. The exact number is unknown at this time. A fire at the facility may have caused the explosion, resulting in a shock wave in the area, causing multiple fires in a six block radius. Investigations of the order of events and cause of the explosion are ongoing. Several homes and structures including an apartment building, nursing home and middle school were severely impacted.

The facility was destroyed in the initial explosion, with the exception of four "bullet" tanks. Initial information indicates that one hopper car filled with ammonium nitrate was on-site at the time of the explosion. This hopper car was blown off the rail siding and was damaged and is believed to have released the powdered fertilizer onto the ground.

State, Local and other Federal Agency Actions: Multiple emergency response agencies are engaged in fire-fighting and public safety activities. The Chemical Safety Board (CSB) has deployed to the accident.

Contractors for the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) continue to conduct air monitoring around the facility perimeter. Other state and local responders continue to conduct search and rescue operations in affected neighborhoods near the incident location.

EPA Actions: The Region 6 EOC is activated to level 3. Region 6 deployed 4 OSCs, 2 Response Support Corps (RSC) members, 8 contractors and the mobile command post to the site.

EPA continues to perform air monitoring in residential areas around the site, including areas where search and rescue operations are ongoing and areas not affected by the evacuation order. Specific chemicals being monitored for are volatile organic compounds, hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, carbon monoxide, and lower explosive limit of methane gas. As of early this morning, monitoring results have not exceeded actionable levels.

Region 6 has requested ASPECT to collect additional photo information today. Poor weather conditions on April 18 affected the quality of the photos collected. The ASPECT team expects to deliver products to Region 6 late today.

EPA is coordinating with Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), 6th Civil Support Team (CST), CSB, TCEQ, and the Office of the Texas State Chemist on current and future site operations. The EPA OSC and EPA CID Agent-in-Charge attended a briefing for Agency Leads this morning at 0800 hrs and participated in a tour of the incident location, including the area excluded by law enforcement.

The Regional Emergency Operations Center coordinated with TCEQ on assistance for drinking water. At this time, TCEQ is not requesting assistance. TCEQ is expected to notify the media of a boiled water notice for West.

Media Interest: HIGH

The HQ EOC is closely monitoring this incident and will provide more updates as necessary.